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ABSTRACT

A beginning has been made in Europe to put private correspondence schools under state supervision of standards; Belgium, Denmark, The Netherlands, and Norway have passed legislation to provide for state inspection of teacher qualification, course content, publicity, travelling salesmen, examinations, and costs to students. In some other countries there are inadequate private regulatory bodies (United Kingdom) or incomplete government supervision (Italy). Malpractices continue to flourish and in some countries (Italy, Austria, and Switzerland) it is easy for unregulated foreign schools to operate. In France there is no regulation and the need is felt badly. The Federal Republic of Germany is in the process of setting up a central authority for supervision. Although in Sweden there is no supervision, standards are high. In Turkey, correspondence education is virtually a state monopoly; although, as yet, on a limited scale, it seems excellently organized. The harmonization of regulations governing correspondence education within the member states of the Council of Europe would improve each individual regulatory organization and protect them from infiltration from across borders by undesirable elements. (EB)

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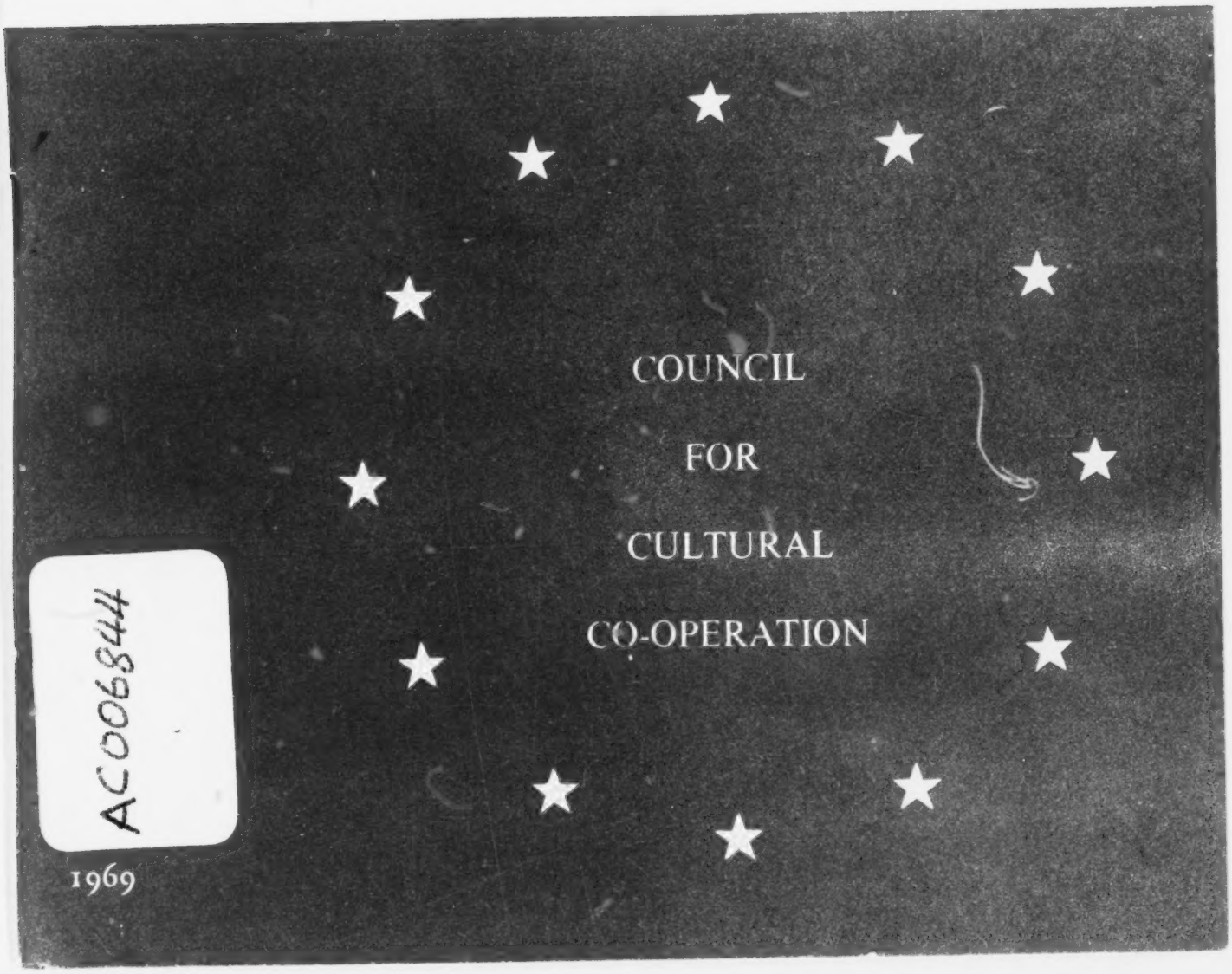

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The Council of Europe was established by ten nations on 5 May 1949, since when its membership has progressively increased to eighteen. Its aim is " to achieve a greater unity between its Members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress ". This aim is pursued by discussion of questions of common concern and by agreements and common action in economic, social, cultural, scientific, legal and administrative matters.

The Council for Cultural Co-operation was set up by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 1 January 1962 to draw up proposals for the cultural policy of the Council of Europe, to co-ordinate and give effect to the overall cultural programme of the organisation and to allocate the resources of the Cultural Fund. It is assisted by three permanent committees of senior officials: for higher education and research, for general and technical education and for out-of-school education. All the member governments of the Council of Europe, together with Spain and the Holy See which have acceded to the European Cultural Convention, are represented on these bodies[1].

In educational matters, the aim of the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CCC) is to help to create conditions in which the right educational opportunities are available to young Europeans whatever their background or level of academic accomplishment, and to facilitate their adjustment to changing political and social conditions. This entails in particular a greater rationalisation of the complex educational process. Attention is paid to all influences bearing on the acquisition of knowledge, from home television to advanced research; from the organisation of youth centres to the improvement of teacher training. The countries concerned will thereby be able to benefit from the experience of their neighbours in the planning and reform of structures, curricula and methods in all branches of education.

Since 1963 the CCC has been publishing, in English and French, a series of works of general interest entitled " Education in Europe ", which record the results of expert studies and intergovernmental investigations conducted within the framework of its programme. A list of these publications will be found at the end of this volume.

These works are now being supplemented by a series of " companion volumes " of a more specialised nature, including catalogues, handbooks, bibliographies etc., as well as selected reports of meetings and studies on more technical subjects. These publications, to which the present study belongs, are listed at the end of this volume.

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COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION
OF THE
COUNCIL OF EUROPE

PUBLIC SUPERVISION OF CORRESPONDENCE COURSES • THE HARMONISATION OF LEGISLATION

by

Isaäc J. SLOOS

STRASBOURG
1969

CONTENTS

		Page
PREFACE		7
I.	CASES OF MALPRACTICE IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION BY CORRESPONDENCE	13
II.	LEGAL DISPOSITIONS IN VARIOUS EUROPEAN COUNTRIES — THEIR PRACTICAL MEANING	19
	A. BELGIUM	20
	B. DENMARK	22
	C. THE NETHERLANDS	23
	D. NORWAY	25
III.	MEASURES TAKEN BY PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS IN VARIOUS EUROPEAN COUNTRIES	27
	A. AUSTRIA	27
	B. FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY	28
	C. FRANCE	29
	D. ITALY	30
	E. SWEDEN	30
	F. SWITZERLAND	31
	G. TURKEY	32
	H. UNITED KINGDOM	33
IV.	CONTROLLING BODIES FOR CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS AS SHAM ORGANISATIONS	35
V.	GROUNDS FOR A HARMONISED REGULATION OF EDUCATION BY CORRESPONDENCE IN EUROPE	37

VI. PROPOSITION BY THE AUTHOR OF THE REPORT FOR A GENERAL REGULATION OF EDUCATION BY CORRESPONDENCE APPLICABLE TO ALL THE COUNTRIES REPRESENTED AT THE COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION 39

CONCLUSION 47

Appendix I 49

Appendix II 51

PREFACE

Heraclitus, the famous philosopher of Greek antiquity, taught as the supreme wisdom that everything on earth is in flux and therefore changeable. Nevertheless, the leisurely pace of life in those days and the consequently slow rate of change could in no respect be compared with the tremendous mobility that characterises our own time. In the last century and a half the pace of development has been steadily increasing, especially as a result of the agrarian, industrial and scientific revolutions. Changes of a fundamental character with their far-reaching consequences follow each other in increasingly rapid succession. Consequently, a new era has opened up for mankind. As in other areas of activity our social and cultural ways of life must take these far-reaching revolutions into serious account. This is particularly the case in the fields of learning and teaching.

A well-known proverb says that a man is never too old to learn. This statement, like that of Heraclitus, dates from a time when the pace of life was much slower than nowadays. Only exceptionally did entirely new situations occur that made it necessary to acquire new insights unexpectedly. By way of consolation for the inconvenience in such cases the saying was invoked that a man is never too old to learn.

The demands made on our generation in the present rapidly changing scene are so heavy and constant that we have to reconsider and reorientate ourselves continually. The evolutionary processes of technology, socio-economic organisation and culture rush forward at such a hectic speed and with so many surprises that the knowledgeable man of yesterday may well be ignorant tomorrow. What was exceptional in former days has almost become the rule: no one is now so old that he need not continue learning.

We shall need to continue to learn in order to keep alive. This seems to be the essential point of the thought of H. G. Wells when he writes: " Human history becomes more and more a race between education and

catastrophe." He poses our dilemma clearly. Only by a profoundly deepened insight together with a tremendous pedagogical effort will it be possible to parry the threat of future catastrophe. In a rapidly changing world it is necessary to be constantly watchful and vigorously engaged in the task of education to prevent indolence and lack of understanding from prevailing within our communities.

The decisive choice concerning the future lies with us. Shall we remain passive observers of turbulent world events, drifting along with the rapidly flowing tide, or shall we try actively to channel the approaching developments along certain progressive lines? Mankind has the capacity to direct the development of society and culture to a desired end. For the right application of this ability, it is, however, necessary to be and to remain up-to-date. There are still too few people in the Western European countries who realise this.

Pedagogically and culturally it is a matter of vital importance that this need to keep abreast of developments is realised clearly. Modern education by correspondence reflects in its techniques the sense of urgency and dynamism needed now. Its flexibility makes it a vital element in the totality of the means available to satisfy the enormous need for education. We must enable both the individual and society to adapt more rapidly than they were formerly able to do with their traditional school-systems. Permanent education requires new and different methods of teaching and learning. The correspondence course is one of the new methods and is already widely available in many countries, and it uses different means of contact between teacher and student than are found in the traditional classroom situation.

Until recently the universities were the main source of new knowledge. At present fresh information is also gathered from the numerous institutes and laboratories maintained by governments and industries. This might be called mass-production of knowledge in "knowledge factories", which daily grow in number and size and where the number of scientific enquirers may run into thousands. Some statisticians maintain that knowledge is currently doubling approximately every fifteen years. Industry now tries to exploit the latest scientific developments as quickly as possible. The lapse of time between a discovery or invention and its application is said to have dwindled to one year or less.

The consequences of these two developments, increased knowledge production and increased knowledge application, have as yet, hardly been given any careful or systematic consideration, and there is inadequate evidence of effective measures being taken to co-ordinate these developments. The consequences are, however, many and they are of a serious nature. The enormous supply of knowledge, the need to disseminate it, and the ever growing need of mankind for further understanding and application of expert knowledge have resulted in a growing need for post-school education, and therefore also for education by correspon-

dence. In this respect we are almost no longer free in our course of action. A man's role in society, in so far as it depends on his knowledge, is now played out sooner than it used to be, because the relevance of a great deal of a person's stock of knowledge soon becomes questionable. New knowledge must therefore be acquired so that personal obsolescence can be avoided. Education by correspondence as a means to that end is therefore more and more widely accepted as an important form of adult education. It has for these reasons become a major social phenomenon. Adult education by correspondence has now almost become a necessity for every one who does not wish to fall back to the lowest levels of his occupation. That is one reason why this method has gained such enormous support, but it is another reason why a much larger responsibility has fallen upon those engaged in this form of education.

The time is past when education by correspondence could be considered a standby; a less valuable substitute when oral education was not available. Statistics over several years prove that the number of people trained by means of a correspondence course living in big cities — where there is a wide choice of oral educational opportunities — is proportionally not less than that in areas where insufficient oral educational facilities exist. Careful analysis of the statistics leads to the conclusion that education by correspondence is definitely needed. This is due to the fact that most adults cannot find an opportunity to study at their ease via oral education or are not inclined to submit themselves to class teaching again.

It may be true that the standards achieved by education by correspondence still differ from one country to another, largely dependent upon the level of development of the various educational agencies provided by the state and more or less private concerns. However the ever increasing international contacts and the developing economic integration of Western Europe are factors which are likely to promote the levelling of the educational standards.

However much we may appreciate the benefits of freedom, and what rich fruit private enterprise may have borne, modern society demands planning of this private initiative in the educational field. Education by correspondence, which is developing into one of the most important pillars of adult education, has, however, dropped far behind other fields where private initiative preponderates as regards the adoption of legal regulation of private activities. The aspiration for *international* harmonisation of legal regulations concerning the supervision of education by correspondence arises from several needs. Such harmonisation would assist the fight against abuses arising from excessive latitude commonly allowed to private enterprise in this field. It furthermore tries to find ways, not only to furnish the participating countries with the details of the latest developments as easily and rapidly as is possible but also to give them the specific services which they need most. Because of this, it becomes a necessity to plan education by correspondence. We cannot leave

the individual alone and unprotected against the strong and growing organisations which in many cases offer inferior education by correspondence with merely commercial intentions. Such concerns often fail to give the student sufficient information before enrolment and to guide him adequately during his course of study.

It, is of course, not our intention to associate the idea of commerce automatically with socially objectionable practices. We are convinced that even in the most rigidly planned social communities the businessman must remain an important factor. We should not only like to class the businessman with the scientist, but we are convinced that his avocation has, remarkably enough, certain liberal features. But just as there are many unprincipled copiers in the realm of art, so we find in the commercial world people who are definitely no credit to their class.

A considerable part of education by correspondence is at present offered by private enterprises. Generally speaking there can be no objection to this. The force and energy of private enterprise are even most desirable in some cases for the efficient organisation of education by correspondence. It is an incontrovertible fact that education by correspondence has been called into existence by private initiative and there is no reason at all why private enterprise should not be able to prepare and lead the development of this form of education. However, the freedom allowed to this private initiative, a far greater freedom, oddly enough, than we can find in any other commercial field, has unfortunately led to serious malpractices, which moreover become increasingly widespread. The whole field might be likened more to a jungle full of hidden dangers for the unsuspecting traveller than to the well-kept garden it should be. It is becoming high time that governments took legal action to canalise private initiative in this field. Institutes for correspondence education in Europe sometimes work havoc with bona fide correspondence education in their own country. In addition, in some countries doubtful correspondence courses are offered from abroad which are a serious menace to the healthy development of the bona fide national institutes. No country can remain indifferent to practices which injure its citizens who are eager to study. Rather it must help them and the need has become greater since permanent education is decidedly no longer a luxury but a social necessity.

It has been said that ethical standards must differ from country to country. We are not convinced of this. It is certainly not the case in the countries dealt with in this report. Every individual is likely to judge a certain situation or line of policy differently, but this need not be the national attitude. Besides, we are not to judge on specific cases in this report but we aim to draw up a list of general rules for the conduct of education by correspondence. It has already been established that there is enough community of thought concerning this matter in the countries of Europe to make such a task a feasible proposition.

Before entering on a review of the problems connected with rules for education by correspondence and the supervisory organisation going with it, we feel obliged, unpleasant as the task may be, to give a few examples of the malpractices occurring in the field of education by correspondence. These existing malpractices are the background we have to keep in mind when drawing up the rules for the conduct of bona fide institutes for correspondence education.

We believe that we can rightly state that education by correspondence in its modern form is entitled to parity of esteem with other forms of education. We also believe, and this is the primary object of this report, that education by correspondence, both in the way it presents its courses and in the way in which it carries out its educational task must promote the social good. The interests of society as a whole should always take precedence over sectional interests where these conflict.

I.

CASES OF MALPRACTICE IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION BY CORRESPONDENCE

(a) Establishments for education by correspondence often hold out to their students great prospects of success at examinations, if only they take such and such a course. In general (and these allegations are always made in general) such publicity is deceptive. In some cases letters are published as coming from grateful old pupils who have been highly successful but often these pupils turn out to be only imaginary.

Another course often pursued is that the school makes a great show of a strikingly successful (and real) old pupil, and suggests that this success is but a normal result of the lessons. This kind of propaganda never states the real number of registrations and how many people really have achieved success. Such propaganda is mostly based on misleading suggestions. Staggering figures are known. There is, for instance, a school somewhere in Europe which advertises widely its secondary school education. Out of the thousand pupils registered in 1961, only thirty had passed the school certificate in 1967 though their propaganda suggests quite differently. Another institute stated in 1964 that it had over 20,000 students registered for its engineering training. Not even one hundred, however, have successfully passed by this time, but this is not made known.

(b) Another common malpractice is that courses are used which are either obsolete or so badly planned that they are completely inadequate for examination training purposes, or for the occupational skill they pretend to teach. This often goes so far that we can with good reason call these educational offers attempted swindles.

(c) The school organises a lottery with prizes of great value. Everybody who applies for a free prospectus together with a free trial lesson automatically becomes an entrant for this lottery and has a chance to win a valuable prize for nothing. The propaganda is bombastic and strident, which results in a great many applications for free lessons including many from people who are not in the least interested in the course applied for, but only in their free lottery ticket. However, the entrants must agree to the stipulation laid down on a coupon which has to be sent in that, if they do not send back their trial lessons, and by registered post at that, within a fortnight after receipt, they are considered to be registered for the whole of the course they were asking information about.

Many people who apply for this trial lesson because of the tempting lottery ticket simply forget all about sending back the trial lesson. Others, not familiar with postal procedures, do the wrong things, so that they still end up in the collecting department of the school concerned. Apart from the disreputable way in which people are recruited here, it will be clear that they are registered for the various courses without any preceding investigation whatsoever into their preliminary training or abilities.

The legal construction which must be placed on offers of this kind inevitably entails payment on the part of the applicants and the judge will in most cases be absolutely powerless against these practices. The use of lotteries of this kind is by no means rare.

(d) The institute creates a travellers' organisation, beautifully worked out with instructors etc. in order to visit the applicants personally and try to get as many people as possible enrolled for some course or other (in its entirety!). Such travelling salesmen are often called study-advisers, but that is only camouflage. These so-called study-advisers are just travelling salesmen, not very different from the common hawker, and their pay depends on the number of pupils they can get. Needless to say, this practice can be just a form of extortion of enrolments.

The institutes employing travellers offer all kinds of shuffling excuses to camouflage the way in which their organisation really works. One of them, for instance, says that their travellers/advisers receive a sufficient and fixed salary, so that they need not depend on commissions based on enrolments. However, in their contract the following stipulation is found:

" The present contract has been entered into for an indefinite time, it being understood that the first two months are to be considered probationary for each of the parties. During this period the contract can be annulled at any time and by either of the parties.

A worked in 'study-adviser' is expected:

1. to conclude at least twelve contracts each month;

2. to conclude at least ten valid contracts for each hundred people visited on the basis of addresses provided by the institute.

A 'study-adviser' is considered to be worked in after an initial theoretical and practical training, followed by at least two retrainings given by the responsible district manager or his substitute.

Non-fulfilment of the standards is a reason to discharge the 'study-adviser'. "

Unfortunately the travelling salesmen system is applied more and more all over Europe. This is a danger to the healthy development of education by correspondence, and the bona fide institutes reject this system as unethical. It is imperative for good education by correspondence to enlighten the prospective students properly. It needs but little imagination to realise what kind of information will be given by the traveller who is forced to reach his quota by hook or by crook.

An extremely dubious side issue of the activities of the travelling salesmen in this field is that the students enrolled via these persons are almost always tied down to a complete — and often expensive — course. If it turns out that the course in question is insuitable for the student, or if he is prevented by circumstance from continuing his study, he is nevertheless obliged to pay the full sum, even though the course might take years. This is one of the conditions which enable the institute to build up a strong salesmen's organisation, for the salesman on his part must be allowed to draw a handsome commission. This will only be possible if he is in a position to conclude a highly profitable contract.

(e) An institute may issue its own diplomas or certificates and proclaim that the industrial world thinks highly of such testimonials. The truth is to the contrary. The world of trade and industry, knowing that such certificates are almost valueless since they lack confidence in the standards they demand, will tend to turn against a candidate rather than be attracted to him for the certificate he shows.

(f) A similarly evil practice is that the institute holds out prospects of lucrative employment to anybody who completes a certain course, prospects which will probably prove illusory, at least via this special course. Some institutes go to great lengths with their pretensions. They make believe that jobs are to be had for the asking for anybody taking such and such a course (which is not true, of course) and that at salaries which are in reality only to be had by a few prominent people in this particular vocational group.

(g) A serious evil is also that many institutes pretend that the prospectuses and trial lessons offered by them are presents. The word " present " is then strongly emphasised, but the meaning of this remains obscure to the general public. Not so to the initiated who knows that it is entirely a question of false publicity once more. So-called gift coupons are added to the advertisements on which the prospective students have to apply for their " present ". Money values are ascribed to these coupons because the institutes hope the public will be persuaded in this way

to apply for some course or other. If this actually happens, the name of the applicant is passed on to the commercial traveller who transforms the innocent applicant into a registered student who has signed a contract which is designed to make him perform financially for the benefit of the institute.

(h) A young man enrols himself at an institute for correspondence education for a secondary school training. After some time he is forced to stop his study. The institute in question, however, is not in the habit of releasing its students from their contractual obligations. By way of "favour" they propose that he should change over to another course. Since there is no way out for the young man who wants to make at least something of his money he has to accept. But then the institute charges him £14 extra for "enrolment costs".

(i) Often the composition of the course and/or the correction of papers of the students are carried out by people who are not qualified to do this. Still worse is where writers or correctors of papers for a course are employed who cannot even remotely be deemed qualified to be teachers for the subjects with which they are concerned. The corrections are mostly performed by young and ill-paid assistants with the help of solutions and keys provided for them by the institute.

Many institutes do not disclose the names and qualifications of their teachers and correctors; nor does the pupil himself know who is attending to his work. It also happens that a pupil receives, with the next batch of lessons, all the answers and solutions to the problems and questions posed in his former lesson. He must then find out for himself what he did well and what may have been wrong.

Both in the case of the unqualified teachers and in that of answers being sent to the pupil we should find it difficult to describe the provision as expert study guidance or acceptable correspondence education. Schools for correspondence education taking this line of policy will defend themselves, saying that their teachers are especially qualified to teach in education by correspondence. This is a mere put-off; the fact is that teachers of correspondence courses should have the same qualifications as those who work in other fields of education and that in addition they should be experienced in correspondence education. Even if this situation does not occur there are many other malpractices in the field of correspondence education which still prevent the student from securing the guidance to which he is entitled, both before and during his studies. For instance, the manner and frequency with which exercises are given to the student may be open to criticism. The exercises may be made so difficult that hardly anybody will find the courage to complete them. That reduces the correction costs of the institute whereas the pupil is still tied down to pay the entire sum demanded. In other cases the exercises are so few, to save correction costs again, that a regular check on the progress of the pupil becomes out of the question.

(j) Some schools advertise that a pupil is only registered if he has shown sufficient talent and this is judged by a free test. The test is often inadequate in that it does not meet the need of the student's guidance, but the prospective pupil, proud of the praise, is eager to be registered, especially if he receives further flattery from the commercial traveller.

(k) There are schools which charge their pupils extra (and heavily) if they have not sent in their papers within a fixed time (three years for instance), even though the course has been paid for in full, including correction of all the papers to be sent in. The students have, it is true, signed their name to this stipulation too, but it was hidden among the small print like the proverbial snake in the grass.

We believe that the above examples will suffice, and the extent to which these practices occur is simply alarming. It is, of course, a fact that the situation in one country may be better than in another, but malpractices are to be found everywhere. The harm done to a country by this wild form of private enterprise in adult education is enormous. Not only are the bona fide institutes seriously damaged in their healthy development, so that they find themselves forced to restrict their public services unnecessarily, but the less reputable institutes also lead people who are willing and eager to learn along the wrong track, on which many come to grief. They may also destroy the eagerness for study of many of the best potential students, and this apart from the financial loss which they occasion.

Our European community continues to be confronted with great economic problems which determine the level of its prosperity. Adult education in our modern society is one of the pillars on which the building of our economy rests. The number of people studying means of correspondence courses is already over two million in Europe. We shall be obliged, if our duty is not to be neglected, from now on to point the way clearly to these students, who for the most part have had to find their way alone. Let there shortly be reliable signposts for their benefit.

II.

LEGAL DISPOSITIONS IN VARIOUS EUROPEAN COUNTRIES - THEIR PRACTICAL MEANING

When judging the merits of any supervisory organ (whether state organised or private) the most important thing to know is whether the regulations are truly observed, and that sanctions are indeed put into effect. It is not very difficult to lay down rules or to enact stringent laws; it is another thing to influence the course of affairs in such a way that the objective of these rules will be attained and this applies to state legislation as well as to rules by private organs.

Although it is a fact that the matter to be controlled (publicity regarding education, contents of courses etc.) results from human activities and cannot be weighed precisely in the balance, it must still be possible to drive out with suitable rules all that is self-evidently bad, so that what remains will range from excellent to good. It will therefore be necessary to allow, within reasonable limits, for variations of quality. Rules established through private initiative generally become less effective as the authority of the various member institutes within the controlling organ becomes greater, because often the tendency then is for the limits to become too wide.

A private supervisory organ, therefore, in which the institutes under its control have any real say, will only be acceptable as an *interim* organisation, as the *precursor* to an organisation in which the institutes to be controlled have no voice or power. This is because in private organisations, however well-intentioned and well-run they may be, all sorts of personal considerations and interests may impede the objective enforcement of a set of rules. It is, for instance, a fact that when the private supervisory organ is dependent on financial contributions from the institutes to be controlled, its effectiveness is liable to be extremely questionable.

Meanwhile, experience has also shown that a supervisory organ set up by the state and arising from the experiences of a preceding private organisation will prove to be the most effective means of solving the problems posed.

A. Belgium

On 5 March 1965 a law was enacted in Belgium which must be considered the fundamental acceptance of education by correspondence by the Belgian Government.

This law distinguishes:

1. education organised, subsidised and recognised by the state given with the intention of preparing correspondence students:

(*a*) for the examinations held by the examination committees instituted by the King for the implementation of the educational laws, and

(*b*) for the administrative examinations, competitive or otherwise;

(the state organised correspondence courses are free);

2. correspondence courses for which fees are charged.

An inspectorial organisation has been set up for education by correspondence as under 1. The schools which organise paid courses have to subject themselves to a few legal regulations which prohibit certain inadmissible practices. Non-compliance with the rules will lead to the proprietors being brought before the court where they are liable to punishment.

The rules concerning education under 1. only refer to courses organised by the Belgian state.

There are no private Belgian schools recognised or subsidised by the state. Consequently, state inspection does not cover correspondence education in general.

Inspection involves:

(*a*) Checks on the qualifications of the teachers

Belgian law requires qualified teachers for the education which is organised by the state, both for the composition of the courses and for the correction of the papers. Teachers chosen need at least three years' teaching experience and must hold the required qualifications.

(*b*) Checks on subsidised courses

The inspectors of the subsidised or recognised correspondence courses have to inspect the texts of the lessons and the tasks and exercises,

as well as the papers of the students and the corrections of the teachers at the place of registration of the organising management. They also have to inspect all the records concerning the studies of the students and their progress. Article 10 of the Act of 5 March 1965 provides for a trial period of one to two years in connection with subsidising and recognition which are granted on the advice of the inspectorate.

(*c*) Checks on the publicity of correspondence schools

All correspondence schools have to abstain from misleading publicity practices regarding the value and seriousness of their courses.

(*d*) Checks on the examinations held by correspondence schools

This subject is not regulated by law, since the law only takes into account state examinations and the courses which train for these examinations.

(*e*) Checks on the financial obligations of the pupils

Enrolment contracts for longer than one year are not valid; nor are agreements on pre-payments for a period longer than three months valid.

(*f*) Checks on the use of travelling salesmen

The use of travelling salesmen in education by correspondence is strictly prohibited in Belgium. However, the law on this subject can be interpreted in such a way that infringement is still possible. There is no control as such, but each person or body interested can lodge a complaint on the ground of infringement of the law. Various people have indeed done so and four institutes for correspondence education had to appear in court. The institutes won their cases in the first hearings, especially as regards the most important points. The prosecuting authority made an appeal after that, but even after eight months the cases in question had not yet been tried by the court of appeal, and it looks as if the Articles 23 up to and including 27 of the Act of 5 March 1965 only have a relative power of compulsion.

(*g*) Checks on premiums

Premiums, presents, returns etc. are all strictly forbidden by Belgian law.

The Belgian law on correspondence education is a considerable contribution towards the raising of the level of education by correspondence. If a Belgian institute for correspondence education is not recognised by the state for those subjects for which courses are also organised by the state itself, its existence as regards these courses is directly threatened. This is because subsidisation depends on recognition and without

subsidies it is impossible for any school to compete with state organised and free correspondence training. It seems probable, however, that private institutes satisfying the conditions and operating in good faith will be recognised by the state.

As we saw above, the practical influence of the state inspection on education by correspondence is not yet very substantial because of the still restricted number of courses subject to this inspection.

In Belgium there is, just as in France, an association of institutes for education by correspondence, but it cannot be considered to be very influential as yet.

B. Denmark

In June 1960 the Education by Correspondence Act was published in Denmark, and since then it has been supplemented on several occasions. The current Danish legislation includes the following requirements:

(*a*) Checks on the qualifications of the teachers

This Danish Act expressly requires the teachers to be fully qualified. The Ministry of Education has to control all the activities of the schools, including, if required, the work of the teachers. It remains to be seen if the obligation to use only qualified teachers (and correctors) will be honoured. There is *no* obligation on the schools to state in their annual report how many teachers they employ.

(*b*) Checks on the contents of the courses

The regulations for schools applying for accreditation are very strict in this respect, but there seem to be no rechecking measures in the regulations. The approval of a single course does not take a long time; such single courses are regularly approved in the course of a few weeks only.

(*c*) Checks on the publicity of correspondence schools

The regulations concerning this subject are sufficiently detailed to give the state ample scope to fight unethical methods. It seems, however, that there are no regulations with regard to the manner in which this kind of publicity should be supervised. The publicity of correspondence schools is actually checked at all times in consequence of the observations of the Ministry itself or because a complaint has been lodged by a student. Once a year the schools submit their advertisements, brochures and other publicity material to the Ministry.

(*d*) Checks on examinations organised by the schools

This point is not legally regulated in Denmark. Every school is free to organise its own examinations and to hand out its own certificates,

except in areas where the general school system has established an official diploma course. This appears to be a flaw in the Danish law. The issue of certificates without strict supervision might be dangerous. The Ministry, however, is of the opinion that a student in any situation should have the opportunity to make the best of any qualification he has acquired, and that is only possible if he has a certificate — in this case from a correspondence school.

(*e*) Checks on the financial arrangements with pupils

The legal regulation of this matter in Denmark is the best of its kind. Students in that country are completely protected. They may at all times and with a short term of notice annul their contracts and the money a pupil may have paid in advance must be refunded to him. This part of the Danish regulation for correspondence education is exemplary.

Unlike the situation in Norway, Danish schools need not put themselves under state control. Malpractices are therefore possible and they do occur. The Danish schools that did not submit themselves to state control can also do what they like in the areas under foreign law.

C. The Netherlands

The Netherlands have just finished their preparations for the legal regulation of education by correspondence, and the promulgation of the Act can be expected at any moment. Just as in Denmark, there will remain the same freedom of education in the Netherlands as there used to be in pursuance of the constitution. This means that establishments which are not good enough to be admitted into the circle of state controlled institutes can go on working undisturbed. However, there are plans for a revision of the constitution, which might lead to rules such as obtained in Norway. The decision to set up a state inspection of education by correspondence has been received with gratitude in industrial and educational circles.

(*a*) Checks on the qualifications of teachers

This subject has been regulated very strictly in the Netherlands, and the rules are strictly enforced. A semi-official inspection organisation had already been set up twenty years ago, in which the institutes themselves have had no say at all during the last eight years. A travelling inspector inspects the schools on the spot. The teachers must have the same qualifications as are required of teachers in normal, oral education. The inspection is so effective that the rules virtually cannot be evaded.

(*b*) Checks on the contents of courses

There is no obligatory pre-inspection of courses in the Netherlands, and the state inspection is not going to introduce it either. But in case

of doubt the inspector is entitled to see the course in question, and this is regularly done. It is not necessary that a course should be fully prepared before it is offered to the public. The institute can secure a dispensation on this point provided that enough lessons are available to ensure uninterupted study by the pupils. The inspector decides on this on application by the institute. The Dutch correspondence schools meet therefore with no obstacles when they wish to set up a new course quickly and effectively. They can also easily provide for any didactic needs in this way, e.g. for completion or amplification courses in accordance with experience gained in the earlier stages of the course. The inspectors get a wide range of experience and a sharply developed feeling for what might be wrong with a school, because they visit each state controlled school several times a year.

They also enquire into the examination results of the schools, which is another means of checking on the quality of the courses. If a course has been found wanting it must be either withdrawn or altered within a given time. The inspector also checks the corrections made by the teachers and this is done in the buildings of the various schools. The schools are also obliged to have some sort of organisation for supervising the work of the correctors.

(*c*) Checks on the publicity of correspondence schools

This is done rigorously. All the prospectuses must be submitted to the inspectorate immediately after publication and they are read word for word; this is also the case with advertisements, circular letters and all printed matters of the same kind. The check on publicity is completely effective in the Netherlands, and could hardly be made any stricter. The inspection has even gone so far as to withdraw the accreditation of a few schools (even large schools) in the Netherlands because of repeated trangression of the publicity norms. The reputation of such a school is in fact seriously damaged by this disciplinary action.

(*d*) Checks on the examinations held by correspondence schools

The inspectors of education by correspondence attend all examinations held by the institutes. The check on the organisation of examinations held by the schools, the marks given by the examiners, the choice of examiners (who are not regular teachers or correctors of the schools), the questions asked — all these subjects form part of the check on the examinations of the school itself. The inspectors also co-sign all certificates awarded by the schools.

(*e*) Checks on the financial obligations of pupils

The new Act states that the financial regulations should be reasonable. A contract valid for longer than one year is considered unacceptable.

(*f*) Checks on the use of travelling salesmen

This method of recruiting students is considered undesirable. Dispensation is possible, but it is rarely given — and only when the nature of a course makes normal publicity impossible.

D. Norway

Since 1949 Norway has had a legal regulation of education by correspondence, which was altered in the Act of 2 June 1960. The most important points of the Norwegian legislation on this subject are:

(*a*) Checks on the qualifications of the teachers

All the institutes must submit an annual report on their activities, stating (among other things) the qualifications of their teachers. By a recent extension of the inspectorial staff it is now possible to check the tasks and corrections on the spot. It is also possible to check by whom the corrections are actually carried out.

(*b*) Checks on the contents of the courses

Before launching a new course a school has to send it in for approval. The course must be rechecked every five years, or between times, if it has been revised.

Although the Norwegian law is indeed a step forward, these points of inspection are still very difficult and the period of five years between checks seems too long for certain courses. Regulations are in preparation for a shorter checking period for courses which require this. Besides, if the checking of a set of lessons should require much time, the normal working of the institute in question might well be very much incommoded by this system of prior control. Moreover, the later stages of a new course are often so dependent on the experience gained during the first lessons of the course in question that placing the whole of the manuscript at the disposal of the inspectorate might present didactic difficulties. For the time being this matter is left in abeyance by the Norwegian Council until a higher standard is attained by all the schools for correspondence education and particularly the private ones.

(*c*) Checks on the publicity of correspondence schools

The Act intends to ensure that every student will receive course material and instruction of an acceptable standard. This is to the benefit of the schools as well as of the students. The scepticism with which the schools used to be regarded at the time when the Act was passed has gradually disappeared. It is now generally accepted that nobody will benefit from inferior courses, bad teaching or financial speculation in this field.

There is no ban on travelling salesmen in Norway, and it has not been necessary to punish any schools for their publicity methods. This may partly be due to the indirect control of the Council.

Foreign schools are not free to operate by post or in other ways. Like the Norwegian schools they have to comply with current legal practice. Some foreign schools applying for approval were rejected and they are not allowed to advertise in Norway or put their courses on the Norwegian market.

(*d*) Checks on examinations held by the correspondence schools

Up to now there has been no supervision of school organised examinations, nor is there any check on the results of these examinations. However, the Norwegian Council will, when expanding its activities, certainly take this point into consideration.

(*e*) Checks on the financial obligations of the pupils

Norwegian schools for education by correspondence are not prohibited from tying a pupil down to paying for a complete set of lessons for one course. This might be a flaw in the Norwegian law where a course extends over several years.

It is a reason for gratitude that the Norwegian Government has taken the initiative and introduced a system of regulation in this field. A further great advantage of the Norwegian law is that *every* Norwegian school comes under it. It is not possible, as is the case in other countries, for some schools to consider themselves free to act as they please.

III.

MEASURES TAKEN BY PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS IN VARIOUS EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

After our description of the situations in Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway, where legal arrangements concerning education by correspondence have come into being, we would now like to pass on to a description of the situations in a few other European countries where private organisations try to regulate correspondence education.

A. Austria

Relatively little education by correspondence is provided by national Austrian institutes. There is one establishment of long standing in Vienna which provides an integrated oral and correspondence course for the *Matura* examination. There are also three non-profit-making organisations, each of which has a correspondence school. These organisations concern themselves especially with professional studies and little with the more liberal side of adult education. Some new institutes are also beginning to prepare their students for the public school examinations by a mixed oral/correspondence education. Certain correspondence courses issued by non-profit-making institutes deal with courses for librarians and theological courses. There is generally a good deal of vocational correspondence education in Austria.

There are, however, four large foreign institutes for correspondence education operating in Austria. These foreign institutes, using methods in their own countries which invite a great deal of criticism, operate in Austria in exactly the same way as they do at home. It is self-evident that the

situation in Austria will become very unpleasant if education by correspondence in that country should become completely dominated by those unqualified foreign elements. It may be true that Austria suffers relatively most from foreign infiltration of this kind, but this happens in all European countries, and the harmonisation of measures to be taken throughout Europe would be very useful if only to protect the various countries against undesirable foreign elements.

As it is to be expected that Austrian education by correspondence will develop rapidly, the initiation of supervision of this education would be very useful. There is already a small beginning by means of certain private inspection.

Education is constitutionally free in Austria, as it is in other countries. Even when education by correspondence is entirely regulated, the possibility of misuse will still remain, therefore, but this, just as in the other countries need not stand in the way of a legal regulation.

B. Federal Republic of Germany

The institutes which offer courses by correspondence in the Federal Republic of Germany are mostly private bodies, apart from the non-profit-making institutes of the *Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund* and the *Deutsche Angestellten-Gewerkschaft*. They offer a wide variety of subjects ranging from recreational subjects (e.g. painting, drawing, foreign languages), to vocational training courses (including technical drawing, book-keeping and accounting). They also prepare adults for state examinations. The highest state certificate which can be obtained through correspondence courses is the *Abitur*, the secondary school leaving certificate which is the qualification for a university education. Students of engineering schools (academies) who obtain good marks in the *Ingenieur* (*grad.*) or *Betriebswirt* (*grad.*) examinations may, under certain conditions, by virtue of the qualification acquired in specific subjects, be admitted to a university.

As all institutes which offer correspondence courses are in private hands, new pupils are attracted by advertising. The type and style of publicity and the media used differ, and information given in newspaper advertisements and prospectuses ranges from the objective to the greatly exaggerated.

The contracts concluded with correspondence institutes fall into three categories:

(*a*) those in which there is no provision for termination;

(*b*) those which limit the right of termination (contract may be terminated after one year);

(*c*) those allowing unrestricted right of termination, without any special conditions or costs (contract may be terminated at the end of each term).

Most correspondence courses are not supplemented by oral instruction or continuous classroom instruction.

At present there are no criteria as to the qualifications of teachers employed by correspondence institutes. Some institutes publish the names of the correctors and teachers who give oral instruction. It can be assumed that at least those institutes which prepare their pupils for state examinations have a qualified teaching staff.

In many respects education by correspondence is going through a transitional phase. Whereas up to the end of the fifties such courses were given by correspondence only, several mixed forms of tuition, including direct oral instruction and education by television, have now been introduced.

Growing public criticism of the operation and advertising methods of individual institutes has in recent years caused greater attention to be given to the idea of self-supervision. A number of institutes have formed associations which, on their own initiative, exercise some sort of supervision over the quality of courses. At the same time, the Conference of Ministers of Education of the *Länder*, after thorough preparatory discussions, has decided to set up in the Ministry of Education of *Land* North-Rhine/Westphalia a central authority for education by correspondence in the Federal Republic. The final negotiations have not yet been completed, but, when set up, this authority will ensure that all correspondence courses for examinations under the aegis of the Ministries of Education of the *Länder* are subject to control.

C. France

There is a syndicate of institutes for education by correspondence in France, the *Syndicat national des directeurs d'Ecoles et Cours par Correspondance*. However, this does nothing to improve the work of correspondence schools. Everybody who offers correspondence education is indiscriminately allowed to join the syndicate. They have a code of ethics, it is true, but it may or may not be followed. There is no supervision, nor are there any sanctions. Consequently, there are quite a few institutes in France which would benefit the country most by disappearing as soon as possible. A few state schools in France offer education by correspondence. These naturally exert a favourable influence upon the general situation of correspondence education.

Education by correspondence is very common in France. The French situation is therefore different from that in Austria, where the need for regulatory measures is felt less urgently because there are hardly any national correspondence schools. France is one of the countries where there is no supervision whatever, although, considering the circumstances, it is certainly a " must " there.

An enquiry into the working methods of private correspondence schools in France was undertaken by the Inspectorate General, which reported on the results. This report showed that French Government circles realise the need for supervision of correspondence education.

D. Italy

Education by correspondence has been used in Italy for many years, and even dates back as far as 1891, which makes the institutions in question belong to the oldest correspondence schools in the world.

An Act of the Ministry of Education of 20 June 1951 prescribes that a correspondence school must apply for an authorisation by that Ministry, which means that the school is placed under the supervision of an " office for private schools ". However, this does not mean the same complete supervision of the activities of the correspondence schools as we met elsewhere and which we have already described. It means only a very superficial check on the honesty and practical working methods of the school in general. There is no private or semi-private organisation for supervision of correspondence education, and it is easy for foreign schools to operate in Italy without any supervision or approval, because the Act of 20 June 1951 is far too indefinite to restrain them.

Italy is, as it were, just on the threshold of an increased need for bona fide correspondence education, but this need cannot be satisfied as long as education by correspondence is not recognised in the same way as it is in most other countries. We believe, therefore, that the co-operation of bona fide Italian correspondence schools, if need be first in the form of a private supervisory organ, is the only way to give Italian education by correspondence the general esteem it needs so much. That we also advocate co-operation with corresponding organisations in other countries goes without saying. The Italian system of authorisation in its present form is, however, a valuable starting-point for a future supervisory organ.

E. Sweden

Sweden has no organs which supervise private education by correspondence. Fortunately, the vast majority of the Swedish organisations for correspondence education operate on very high standards. Even though most Swedish schools have thus acceptable norms, compared with standards in other countries, it must still be said that during our investigation in Sweden the authorities we interviewed, and who, because of their functions, were best able to judge objectively, did not accept without criticism everything done by all private enterprises. There are a few institutions whose publicity and other recruiting methods would certainly be at discord with the generally advocated standards and principles.

The Swedish Government had a report drawn up on the working methods of private correspondence schools in Sweden, entitled: *Statens offentliga Utredningar* 1962: 16 *Korrespondensundervisningen inom skolväsendet* and *Vuxenutbildning*, which contains many critical observations.

Since there is no control whatsoever of private correspondence institutes, we believe, in view of the above, that the institution of a supervisory organ would be very useful in Sweden and our opinion concerning this matter was fully confirmed by a few managers of a large correspondence school run by among others the Swedish Trade Unions.

It does not often occur in Sweden that institutes for education by correspondence employ travelling salesmen, but there are indications that this evil is spreading there too. One should, however, make a difference between an institute which pays salesmen to canvass for courses from which it derives financial benefit, and institutes like the correspondence school run by among others the Swedish Trade Unions which send unpaid representatives to counsel students in the choice of courses for the latter's benefit.

In so far as correspondence material is used in public education, this material is, of course, subject to the same control as other teaching material, that is, the approval of the local school authority. There are two state run correspondence schools in Sweden, namely the Defence Correspondence School (*Försvarets brevskola*) and the School of Adults in Norrköping. These schools are also producers of correspondence material.

F. Switzerland

The number of schools for education by correspondence is relatively large in Switzerland, although the schools themselves are small and there is no organisation of correspondence schools there. Only one single school is a member of a European organisation for education by correspondence. A few other Swiss schools will probably join soon. The need for private national organisation is indeed felt there. This is because foreign schools, although not yet active in Switzerland, are expected to become very active there in the near future.

Polyglottism, and the small language areas have prevented education by correspondence in Switzerland from developing as strongly as in other European countries and these very circumstances make it easy for foreign institutes to absorb parts of Switzerland in their field of activity. The building up of a national organisation to promote the interests of education by correspondence in co-ordination with a harmonised European regulation of correspondence education would certainly be of great use, if only those schools are allowed to join this organisation which are willing to fulfil certain conditions. In order to protect prospective correspondence students, ten criteria have, in the meantime, been

issued by the SIB (*Institut Suisse pour la formation commerciale supérieure*) which the students should bear in mind for their own benefit before actually enrolling in a course. They should enquire:

— Whether they will be properly attended to during their entire study by qualified teachers;

— Whether the publicity of the institute in question is true to fact and does not make exaggerated promises;

— Whether enquiries are made by the institute in question into the preliminary training of the prospective student;

— What exactly are the obligations on the part of the institute in exchange for the fees of the courses. That especially should be done before the student enters into any contract;

— If they want to do so, what are the names, occupations and qualifications of the correspondence teachers concerned;

— Whether the prospective students will not be visited by a salesman or so-called study-adviser, with the intention of inducing them to enrol for a course;

— Whether the prospective students are allowed to inspect a few lessons before entering on any contract with the right of sending them back within a reasonable time;

— Whether they will have the possibility of annulling the contract at least after expiry of one semester without giving any grounds, and in the case of evident dissatisfaction on the part of the student at any desired moment;

— Whether the institute complies with the legal prescriptions regarding the financial arrangements;

— Whether the institute uses the word "recognised" for its examinations, which term is only possible for examinations recognised by the official Swiss authorities.

Legal regulation of education by correspondence might be difficult to realise in Switzerland (as well as in the Federal Republic of Germany) owing to the autonomy of the various Swiss cantons. The director of the *Centre d'information en matière d'éducation et d'enseignement* at Geneva confirmed, however, that a great interest is nevertheless taken in international co-operation for the supervision of education by correspondence.

G. Turkey

Education by correspondence is virtually a state monopoly in Turkey. Under a "Directorate General for Education by Correspondence and Technical Publications" of the Turkish Board of Education, several correspondence courses have been organised and made available at very low prices. There are two groups of courses — one training for official school examinations, the other for special occupations. The students

partly consist of young people who had insufficient opportunities at school, and partly of adults who want to increase their occupational knowledge. The curriculum of the courses is mainly technical, electrical engineering being the most important subject.

The courses appear to be excellently organised. A student who does not send in any work for correction is warned once — if he continues to be unresponsive he is removed from the register.

All the teachers are fully qualified, but the variety of the courses is not yet great and the total number of students is only 1,500. The Turkish school uses unexceptionable publicity methods to increase its number of pupils.

International co-operation is appreciated by those Turkish authorities which are concerned with education by correspondence.

H. United Kingdom

The Association of British Correspondence Colleges (ABCC) is currently the major regulating organisation in Great Britain and includes the great majority of privately owned colleges. Its affairs are regulated by the member institutes themselves. There is at present no systematic control of correspondence colleges and no systematic checking of publicity material although increasingly comprehensive consumer protection legislation should have a beneficial effect on the reliability of representations made by colleges to would-be students.

(*a*) Checks on the qualifications of teachers

The ABCC code of ethics states that only qualified teachers should be employed and that the courses should be reasonably up-to-date but gives no indication of how these aims should be realised and effective controls established. The definition of a qualified teacher presents some difficulties, too, since a large percentage of teachers in colleges of further education have had no formal pre-service teacher training but possess a degree and/or professional vocational qualifications. The crux would appear to be whether they are suitably qualified for the work they are to do.

(*b*) Checks on the contents of courses

Practice in this respect is not yet sufficiently developed to be described as effective control.

(*c*) Checks on the publicity of the institutes

The ABCC is actively striving to eliminate unethical publicity but all the material does not systematically undergo its scrutiny. Nevertheless it has made its influence felt on several occasions — misleading publicity overseas has given rise to serious concern.

The problem of the employment of salesmen by correspondence schools has not yet been solved in Great Britain.

(*d*) Checks on examinations organised by the schools

The ABCC code of ethics ignores this point and consequently does nothing to prevent the correspondence colleges from providing examinations of any kind they wish. In the United Kingdom, however, diplomas awarded by correspondence schools have virtually no standing and cannot be passed off as being equal to the awards of recognised examining bodies.

(*e*) Checks on financial obligations undertaken by students

The rules of the ABCC code of ethics on this point lack precision. They do not provide that degree of security for the student which is considered desirable in many other countries.

Nevertheless, it is encouraging to record dissatisfaction with the inadequacy of the existing machinery for the regulation of colleges and the elimination of abuses. In 1965, the colleges themselves set up a committee to draft a scheme for the accreditation of correspondence colleges in which the ABCC, in collaboration with institutes which are not members of that association, tried to bring about a form of voluntary regulation. It can be expected now that the report of this committee (the Gurr Report) has recommended the setting up of an accrediting and controlling body, that supervision of correspondence colleges will be carried out more effectively than formerly. The active interest of the government (the Gurr Report recommended that the Secretary of State for Education and Science should nominate a majority of the members) is an important step forward in the development of education by correspondence in the United Kingdom, although the government has refused to bear any of the cost.

A group of non-profit-making British correspondence colleges have in varying degrees expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed accreditation machinery. They regard with particular alarm the financial arrangements by which the costs will have to be borne by the commercial colleges alone. These arrangements are considered to impair so seriously the effectiveness of the Accreditation Council that one college at least has declared its intention to decline application for accreditation. Such critics favour much deeper involvement of the state in both the financial and the inspection arrangements.

Indications have lately arisen which suggest increased possibilities of a drawing together of the various parties.

IV.

CONTROLLING BODIES FOR CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS AS SHAM ORGANISATIONS

We have pointed out before that supervision of education by correspondence will mean nothing and had consequently better not come about at all, if it is not enforced strictly. Keeping up pretences would even work negatively, since the schools would then have even stronger arguments to induce people to enrol for their courses if they were able to prove that they were checked by a supervisory body. This check would not mean a thing in that case and the deceit would be cumulative. This goes both for ineffectual state and private regulations. Such controls might still be based on ideal principles and they might lead in the end to good results. The case would, however, be quite different if supervisory organisations were created with the deliberate intention of being purely beautiful facades for one or more institutes for education by correspondence. They might suggest in the most florid phrases that the schools were inspected by a supervisory body, which was in fact nothing but a sham. This spectacle is often presented by schools which do not get the chance of joining any bona fide organisation or are threatened with expulsion from one because they will not or cannot fulfil conditions which have been necessarily made more onerous.

Most of these organisations are national. There are also a few which call themselves European and one of their traits is that they choose, in their attempts to be taken seriously, names which show close resemblance to organisations which have gained good reputations in other parts of the world.

We think it advisable that organisations which set themselves up as controlling bodies for correspondence schools should only be recognised by the authorities (for instance in connection with approval of the articles

of association presented by them) if the supervision as suggested by these bodies is really effective and possible, bearing in mind the design and organisation of the controlling body. They would further need to prove that they are not duplicates of already existing organisations and weaker ones at that. Refusal of the right to act as a legal person could easily be argued by declaring the set-up of such an organisation as being contrary to interests of the community. We believe that the private controlling bodies presenting themselves are as much of a problem in the complex world of education by correspondence as the correspondence schools themselves. If there is already an organisation in some country or international community designed for the elevation of the ethical levels of education by correspondence, and another competing organisation also presents itself, then it is time to hoist the red flag, for the danger of camouflaged deceit is near.

V.

GROUNDS FOR A HARMONISED REGULATION OF EDUCATION BY CORRESPONDENCE IN EUROPE

The harmonisation of the regulations governing correspondence education within individual countries would offer great advantages. Each country would be enabled to profit from wider collective experience and each national supervisory organisation could consequently be readily improved. Another advantage would be that the countries with effective regulatory systems would be protected from infiltration from across their borders by undesirable elements in correspondence education.

We already pointed out in this report how the situation now stands in Austria. Conditions are similar in Belgium and we might even go further, since the whole of Europe is a present subjected to influences from other parts of the world. We should not be opposed to external influences and we have no desire to reject that which at first sight appears incompatible with our current practices. If it were so we had better abstain from international activities. We thought we had better stress this point so as to rid ourselves of any suspicion of chauvinism if we warn against influences which seriously threaten European education by correspondence.

If commercial activities penetrate into education by correspondence, leading to " big business " and trying to build up " hard-selling organisations " then a tap is opened from which nothing will flow but massive deceit of the people.

International harmonisation of dispositions concerning education by correspondence will prevent a well-organised national community from being infiltrated by undesirable foreign elements. If the European countries prove able to come to an arrangement concerning the legal regulation of education by correspondence, malpractices will disappear and institutes will find it increasingly difficult to move elsewhere if things are made hot for them in their own country.

VI.

PROPOSITION BY THE AUTHOR OF THE REPORT FOR A GENERAL REGULATION OF EDUCATION BY CORRESPONDENCE APPLICABLE TO ALL THE COUNTRIES REPRESENTED AT THE COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION

The purpose of this regulation is twofold:

1. To prescribe a set of rules in respect of publicity and education;

2. To suggest the possible organisation of a supervisory body to enforce the above-mentioned set of rules.

The first point of the regulations is essentially bound up with the second.

We shall have to set rules of conduct, couched in the clearest possible language and of such a nature that their observance is practicable, and we shall have to see to it that these rules are observed all along the line. As we remarked before, it is not very difficult to draw up a generally acceptable set of rules. However, the exact manner of ensuring adherence to the rules is something which *cannot* be put on paper down to the last detail, because this is a practical matter which depends very much upon the people who do it. It will have to be worked out as a result of experience; by a series of decisions which will produce definite cases; by a development which will slowly lead to the end in view.

We shall have to take into account that the level of development of correspondence education is different in the various European countries and we shall not be able to bring the lowest level up to the desired standard overnight.

A. Draft of suggested regulations to be complied with by correspondence schools

1. Basic standards

(a) There should be study guidance concerning the choice of courses and levels;

(b) The teachers whose duty it is to design the whole or part of the written courses in each of the subjects provided, and the persons who are responsible for the guidance of students during their studies, shall be suitably qualified for the work they are doing. Unqualified teachers or assistants shall be prohibited. The checking of scripts should be done by experts.

Explanatory remark

It sometimes occurs that education by correspondence employs assistants who are not qualified and unable to guide the pupils or perform the corrections and explanations required of them properly. The prescription of qualified teachers with the same qualifications as those required of the teachers of oral education is, therefore, commendable.

Education by correspondence also has courses which as regards the teachers as yet do not require well-defined qualifications. The supervisory body shall have to decide here whether the candidate named will be able to act as a teacher on the ground of his knowledge and experience.

(c) The work of the students shall be guided and supervised. They shall be given the opportunity to send in their work for correction and to submit questions at regular intervals, and they shall be given the maximum encouragement to do so. It is desirable that the student should have the opportunity of having additional oral instruction too.

Explanatory remark

Just as there is a great deal of absenteeism in oral adult education, we also see in education by correspondence that some students do not send in enough papers. The purpose of this article is that the students should be pressed repeatedly to send in their work regularly so that they get the most out of their course.

(d) The costs of correction of the students' papers and of answering the questions they pose shall be included in the tuition fees.

Explanatory remark

It often happens that the financial obligations on the part of the students are not defined clearly in the prospectus. Then the school is in a

position to present the student with the bill from the teacher for the corrections he has made. This can lead to unpleasant surprises and the student may well be at the mercy of the school.

(e) The objectives of the school shall be such that they can be achieved through correspondence study, combined with such other appropriate means that the course may require. The educational objectives shall be reasonably attainable. Appropriate objectives include the development of skills, the provision of job-related training, the imparting of information, training in the application of knowledge and in the development of desirable habits and attitudes. Evaluation of the educational programme shall be based upon the announced objectives of the course and the success with which those objectives are achieved. Instructional material shall reflect current knowledge and practice.

Explanatory remark

Many courses are offered which are insufficiently related to the subjects promised in the prospectus. It also happens that courses are offered which cannot remotely lead to the desired end because of their nature as correspondence courses.

(f) Publicity, and the financial arrangements between institute and student, shall be in accordance with the existing standards of education in general. Students shall be able to cancel their contracts at intermediate stages of their studies and they shall never be tied down for a period longer than six months.

Explanatory remark

This article stresses that institutes for correspondence education should be true in their publicity; it also and especially is intended to guard against long-term commitments of the student. It often occurs that a student has signed a contract for four years, and this was forced upon him by a glib salesman. Then it appears after a few months' study that the subject matter is far too difficult for him, or he may be forced by personal circumstances to abstain from further study.

2. Supplementary standards

(a) Each student shall at the beginning of the course be informed in respect of the detailed requirements of the course and the types of tasks he will have to perform, taking into account the possible use of combined methods.

Explanatory remark

This article is closely related to Article (*a*) of the Basic Standards.

(b) The directors of schools shall have to see that the teachers correct the papers thoroughly and that the students' work is constantly controlled and assessed.

Explanatory remark

Schools for education by correspondence often use the services of a great many part-time teachers. This article statutorily obliges the management of a school to check on the working methods of all their teachers. They should take care that no teacher will make light of his work.

3. Special standards

(a) Institutes for education by correspondence must be able to satisfy the controlling body that they can fulfil their obligations towards their students. They are, therefore, to provide reasonable guarantees with respect to their financial status and their continued existence. They must, furthermore, be in possession of all necessary equipment for the courses they provide.

Explanatory remark

An institute for education by correspondence must prove that it is financially strong enough to finish a course, once started upon, for which students have enrolled. It frequently occurs that an institute has to stop a course half-way owing to shortage of financial means. The interests of the students might then be seriously injured.

(b) Institutes on a non-profit-making basis shall — as far as national legislation allows — annually produce certified statements covering all the points required by the controlling body. This information will be treated confidentially by government authorities.

Explanatory remark

Education, even that organised by private bodies, is a public service. Therefore it has to be controlled. The non-profit-making organisation will have to show by means of an audited statement that no moneys from the fees of the students flow to persons or agencies which do not lead to the preservation or improvement of the educational apparatus. This will be necessary to put an end to false publicity regarding this matter.

(c) Institutes which prepare their students for examinations shall inform the controlling body, at its request, of the results of such examinations, in so far as these results may reasonably be expected to be known to the institutes concerned.

Explanatory remark

This is an excellent means of keeping the contents of correspondence education under control. This article opens up the way for comprehensive control of the entire educational approach, which could never be reached by means of mere preventive control of the *contents* of a course.

(d) In the countries in which there are no special laws on this matter correspondence schools must obtain the sanction of the regulating body for the award of diplomas, or certificates. In each case the regulating body should give appropriate rules.

Explanatory remark

The issue of diplomas or certificates by schools for correspondence education should be kept under careful control. Some schools (often misleadingly) inflate, in their advertisements, the value of the testimonials issued by them; these papers are in reality mostly absolutely worthless in society and the innocent pupil, trapped by wily propaganda, will find his hopes deceived.

(e) Each institute may be asked for records concerning all particulars specified by the controlling body which shall have free access to them.

Explanatory remark

This general article gives the controlling body freedom of enquiry.

(f) Each institute shall prove to the satisfaction of the controlling body that the contractual obligations undertaken by the students are based on equitable principles. The obligations of both parties shall be clearly stated in the prospectus and repeated on the enrolment form, and students shall be required to state in writing that they are aware of their obligations.

Explanatory remark

The publicity of some institutes for correspondence education regarding the obligations of the students still contains far too many obscurities. Such deception should be specifically proscribed. Even the most simple-minded student must be able to understand clearly and from the beginning what he is up to and what his obligations are.

(g) Institutes wishing to employ representatives of any type or under any name must obtain permission to do so from the controlling body and shall observe all conditions stipulated by the latter in this respect; the over-riding principle to be that representatives should not be allowed to sell courses to students.

Explanatory remark

It is a fact that this system of representatives/salesmen leads to major abuses which should not occur in educational work.

4. Professional code

Each institute shall:

(a) Formulate its lessons, prospectuses and publications in accordance with the law and with the generally accepted standards of educational practice.

Explanatory remark

This article is provided for the purpose of completeness. There are only a few rare cases in which it must be applied.

(b) Formulate its publications and carry out its advertising in such a way as to convey an accurate picture of the institute and its courses. In particular, it must not hold out any promises in respect of results that it cannot reasonably hope to fulfil. Assertions in respect of the demands the course makes on the students must be fair and realistic.

Explanatory remark

This again refers to a serious and frequent malpractice in education by correspondence. Prospective students are promised chances of splendid, well-paid jobs as if this could be expected with certainty in any case. There is mostly little chance of such jobs. The propaganda often gives the example of one single brilliant person having taken this course. This is a favourite working method of some institutes.

(c) Make no offer of any gift or reward, whether in money or in money value, as an inducement for people to apply for information about the institute or any of its courses.

Explanatory remark

Those who once have exposed themselves to this highly suspicious form of charity often find themselves unwittingly manoeuvred with all kinds of artifice into enrolment for a certain course.

(d) Observe the regulations of the controlling body, fulfil all the obligations towards the controlling body, and, once removed from the list of institutes regulated by the controlling body, relinquish all rights connected with the acceptance of such control.

(e) Provide the controlling body with all the information it requires in connection with the observance of the regulations, and afford it every facility, should it wish to institute an enquiry into the operations of the institute.

(f) Inform the controlling body at reasonable intervals of all changes in the institute relating to the management, the teaching staff and to proposed alterations in or extensions to the field of activities of the institute.

B. Comments on the suggested draft regulations

Such a general set of rules will, of course, have to be consolidated in the statutes of the national private organisations that are going to act as supervisors, or in the statute laws of the countries concerned.

This set of rules differs from the legal regulations of Denmark and Norway on various points; it differs less from the Belgian and Dutch regulations. An important distinction is whether the courses are pre-checked or not. Norway and Denmark require previous control; our plan suggests, at least mainly, post-control. Only in case of doubt will there be a pre-check on the school that asks for accreditation. Preventive control has in practice tended to hamper the free and efficient expansion of the institutes concerned. The schools for education by correspondence are especially hampered in one of their most characteristic features: their ability to take quick action wherever there is an educational need. Preventive control, moreover, does not prevent a course which has originally been approved of by a supervisory body, but which has meanwhile grown obsolete, from still being used by the school concerned. The post-control system of unremitting check upon a school puts it under the pressure of unannounced checks on any part of the entire educational programme of the school. In a well-organised inspection of correspondence education, the supervising functionaries will be able to judge very accurately what might be wrong with any particular school, and they will be able to take measures where they are needed. The result will be a far more efficient check on all the courses.

Measures for checking the examination activities of schools are often lacking in existing regulations. This may be a dangerous omission, because no correspondence school should ever be allowed to degenerate into an objectionable " diploma mill ".

Prohibition of the use of travellers is to be found only in the Belgian and Dutch regulations. The control of publicity might become disorganised, and therefore ineffective, if the employment of travellers is not forbidden. The promises made by travellers in order to secure enrolments are not susceptible to any form of control. Experience has clearly taught that enrolments obtained by means of travelling agents often lead to difficulties. Experience also shows that schools which use representatives

often have a heavy labour turnover among salesmen, which is enough to make any unprejudiced person think. Schools which pretend that they control their representatives themselves say something which they cannot prove. Any representative, whose livelihood and prosperity depend on the number of pupils induced to enrol, is naturally a hard-selling person. This has nothing to do with educational advice, and this practice should be banned from our European society.

CONCLUSION

We hope that this report will stimulate more vigorous action to introduce the overall supervision of education by correspondence throughout the European countries. A supervisory body for correspondence education which worked well would be of great advantage to a form of education which can no longer be ignored by society, and which is moreover about to develop so rapidly that lack of efficient supervision might be well-nigh disastrous.

At a rough estimate there are in Europe about 400 correspondence schools, and about 2,5000,000 people enrol annually for correspondence courses. The need for and the use of education by correspondence is growing daily, so that the number of pupils will soon be considerably greater than it is now. The shortage of educational opportunities after school leaving is an oppressive problem everywhere in the world. Education by correspondence can do much towards overcoming this shortage. If the development of education by correspondence is hampered by certain practices of some over-commercialised schools, important life forces of our community will be inhibited. Many people who are already absorbed in the industrial process — people who devote a great deal of energy in their spare time to seeking means of doing their job better — are currently being victimised by these schools.

A social problem of enormous size is involved in this check on education by correspondence. Anyone at all abreast of the social developments of our present society will know that the social welfare service has expanded everywhere since the second world war. They will also understand that education by correspondence could not remain unaffected by this development and had to adapt its attitude to the requirements of time.

APPENDIX I

List of national authorities and experts consulted

In order to carry out our enquiry, we have visited the following cities: Linköping, Oslo, Copenhagen, Brussels, Geneva, Vienna, Paris, The Hague, Bonn and London.

We had interviews with the following officials:

— Mr. B. Goethberg, Inspector of Swedish Folk high schools, National Board of Education, Fack, Stockholm.

— Mr. B. Grotmoll, Chief clerk in the Department of School buildings, Oslo.

— MM. A. and B. Saxe, Directors of Denmark's *Brevskole* (also representing the Danish Ministry of Education).

— Mr. Paul Rock, *Directeur général de la Jeunesse et des Loisirs, Ministère de l'Education Nationale à Bruxelles.*

— Mr. Eugen Egger, Directeur du Centre d'Information en matière d'éducation et d'enseignement, Geneva.

— Dr. Alfred Brodil, *Ministerialrat, Bundesministerium für Unterricht,* Vienna.

— Mr. Chilotti, *Directeur de l'Institut Pédagogique National,* Paris.

— Mr. Francis Gobin, *Chef du Bureau des Organisations internationales, Direction de la Co-opération, Ministère de l'Education Nationale,* Paris.

— Dr. L. B. van Ommen, Director for Youth Affairs, Adult Education and Sports, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Recreation and Social Welfare, Rijswijk.

— Dr. M. D. van Wolferen, Director of the Section: Occupational Education of the Ministry for Education at The Hague.

— Mr. G. Haagmann, of the *Sekretariat der ständigen Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Dokumentations- und Auskunftdienst,* Bonn.

— Mr. W. J. Huntingford, Senior Executive Officer, External Relations Branch, Department of Education and Science, London.

— Mr. L. J. Melhuish, Department of Education and Science, London.

Our data are further partly based upon contacts with many directors of correspondence schools, namely:

— Mr. H. A. Verbrugge, *Nationale Stichting voor Hogere Studien*, Brussels.

— MM. A. and B. Saxe, Denmark's *Brevskole*, Copenhagen.

— Mrs. E. Horn, *Teknisk Korrespondanceskole*, Copenhagen.

— Mr. H. Muller-Albrechts, *Rustin Lehrinstitut*, Düsseldorf.

— Mr. W. Kamprath, *Studiengemeinschaft Werner Kamprath Darmstadt*, Darmstadt.

— Mr. E. R. Andrew, International Correspondence Schools, London.

— Mr. H. R. Light, Sir Isaac Pitman Correspondence Colleges Ltd., Godalming, Surrey.

— Mrs. Janet V. Newell, Wolsey Hall, Oxford.

— Mr. Y. Defaucheux, *Etablissements Pigier*, Paris.

— Conte Dr. F. Bisi, *Scuole Riunite par Corrispondenza*, Rome.

— Mr. E. Rorstad, *Norsk Korrespondanseskole*, Oslo.

— Mrs. S. Gran Andresen, *Folkets Brevskole*, Oslo.

— Dr. P. Roland, *Maturaschule Dr. Roland*, Vienna.

— Mr. J. Marti, CEAC, Barcelona.

— Dr. B. Holmberg, Hermods, Malmö.

— Mr. K. E. Wählstrom, *Brevskolan*, Stockholm.

APPENDIX II

Our discussions were based on the two following questionnaires, A and B:

A. The questionnaire which we sent to the various government officials:

1. What institutes for correspondence education are there in your country? (Please give a complete list, with full addresses).

2. Are any of these institutes based on a non-profit-making structure? If so, which ones?

3. Do any of your public bodies (army, navy, government departments) make use of education by correspondence?

4. If so, is this education provided by private schools or is it organised by the government itself?

5. Are there any legal dispositions concerning education by correspondence in your country? If so, could you please provide us with the text of them (preferably in the English language)?

6. If there are any such dispositions, how are your correspondence schools supervised (and at what frequency) concerning the following:

(*a*) contents of the courses;

(*b*) publicity ethics;

(*c*) results of official and semi-official examinations;

(*d*) certificates (if any) of the schools themselves;

(*e*) teachers' qualifications in relation to the regulations for teachers in direct attendance schools in your country;

(*f*) supervision of the effective correction of students' papers;

(*g*) contracts with the students; are the students bound to pay for the whole course or only for part of the course?

(*h*) the use of representatives.

7. If there is no government supervision of education by correspondence in your country, are any private bodies (organised by the correspondence institutes themselves, or otherwise) charged with such supervision? If so, how effective is this supervision in respect of items 6 (*a*) to (*h*)?

8. Would your government appreciate any endeavour to introduce supervision of education by correspondence in your country or is it perhaps considering or already planning such supervision itself?

9. Are there any statistical returns in your country of the number of correspondence students and the kind of correspondence courses given (techniques, languages, agriculture etc.)? Could you provide us with such data?

10. Are you interested in international co-operation in this field of education; at least in exchanging experiences and — if possible — in the harmonisation of legal regulations?

11. Do you know any correspondence schools in your country which give supplementary oral tuition; or, conversely, any oral schools giving supplementary correspondence tuition?

12. Are there universities in your country with an "extension department" where correspondence courses are used; or, are there correspondence courses for official university degrees in your country?

B. The questionnaire which we asked the heads of correspondence schools to fill in:

1. Would you send your latest prospectuses and — if possible — copies of your last year's advertisements, and brochures or letters for recruitment of students, if any?

2. Does your school prepare candidates for official examinations or for other examinations on which your school cannot exercise any influence?

3. Does your school award diplomas of its own?

4. How long has your school been in existence?

5. What are the contractual terms by which your students are bound? Can they be released from their obligations after a certain time, or are they bound to pay for the whole course?

6. Do you employ representatives?

7. Is your school under governmental supervision, or is it supervised by a private organisation? What does this supervision imply?

8. What is your opinion on this supervision? (Your reply will be considered confidential.)

9. If there are no supervisory bodies for correspondence courses in your country, what do you think of the idea of supervision or correspondence education:

(*a*) by the government;

(*b*) by a private organisation?

10. Is your school a fully private institute, or has it a non-profit-making structure?

11. Would you kindly provide us with the addresses of the other correspondence schools in your country, and do you know the approximate number of correspondence students of all the institutes in your country together?

12. Does your school supplement its correspondence courses with oral tuition (regularly or incidentally)?

13. Please give us your opinion on future possibilities for correspondence education in respect of:

(*a*) co-operation with the official oral education system;

(*b*) further development of correspondence tuition in general;

(*c*) elimination of the objections that some people have to correspondence education;

(*d*) the use of new methods in correspondence tuition; development of the didactics of education by correspondence.

14. Would you — if you feel the need to do so — give us further information about your special views?

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